



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1986 Volume III: Topics in Western Civilization: Ideals of Community and the Development of Urban Life,
1250-1700

The Ideas and Ideals of Man, From the Renaissance to the Reformation

Curriculum Unit 86.03.04
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Introduction . This unit of study is intended to be a ten to fifteen day inquiry into the streams of thought which fed the Renaissance and caused the currents to increase in velocity and power until they became too violent to be contained within the banks of a single river. Students will be encouraged to trace the development of ideas which had their origin in classical antiquity and the Middle Ages and which have continued to the present. It is hoped that they will learn that many of the inner conflicts which engaged men and women in the past were expressed in literature, architecture and the arts and can thus be observed and felt today. Illustrative of these conflicts are the following two quotations about man's capabilities by two different artists of the Renaissance:

'With the forethought that we are mortal, and that every adversity can befall us, let us do what the wise have so highly praised: let us work so that past and present will contribute to the times that have not yet come. . . And we, brought into life like a ship which is not meant to rot in port but to furrow long paths in the sea,—we tend by our work to some praiseworthy and glorious end.' (Quoted in Gadol, pp. 2245)

The writer, humanist and artist, Leon Battista Alberti, believed that man should act as if he can not only shape his character but shape his future through intelligent action and diligent work. A later view, that of the German artist Albrecht Durer, contrasts with Alberti's view of man's ability to create:

'Only the powerful artists will be able to understand this strange speech, that I speak the truth: one man may sketch something with his pen on half a sheet of paper in one day, or may cut it into a tiny piece of wood with his little iron, and it turns out to be better and more artistic than another's big work at which its author labors with the utmost diligence for a whole year. And this gift is miraculous.' (Quoted in Panofsky, p. 283)

According to Durer, only God knows what True Beauty and worth are; man can only keep trying to improve his abilities so that a "better" result can be achieved.

The student will be challenged to come to grips with the ideas of the Renaissance and the Reformation in such a way that the student should see that "attitude determines action" and "philosophy determines practice." During this historical period there was a conflict of ideas between the Judeo-Christian system of values and the Classical Greco-Roman system. One value system was based on absolute commandments ("Thou shalt have no other gods before me"); the other base on morality and ethics determined by man's reasoning powers and

common sense. Was Renaissance man subject to absolute rules or those of his own making? Protagoras stated his belief in a man-centered system in his pronouncement, "Man is the measure of all things." In contrast, the Psalmist put it this way: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" Where was man to turn in his struggle for identity: inward to self or upward to the Creator? Could the Church, now centered in Rome, blend successfully both positions into one system?

The first half of this unit deals with the Renaissance, and especially with the efforts to harmonize the conflicting systems by a study of Italian humanism and artistic expression of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The second half of the project considers the road which led to the Protestant Reformation and the extent to which the Reformation was both a product of the Renaissance and a challenge to it. What was the nature of the revolutionary "seeds" that were planted in previous centuries which produced such a tumultuous harvest during the lifetime of sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin?

This course study will attempt to illuminate a period of history during which many characteristics of our own "modern" world began to emerge. Man seemed to be awakening to new ideas and new lifestyles that would have significant implications to future generations. As the students consider these ideas and lifestyles, it is this teacher's hope that they may see something of themselves in the process. My experience tells me that the attempt is worth it; that not only my students but I, the teacher, will be better for having tried. To quote Albrecht Durer:

'Now since we cannot attain to the *very best*, shall we give up our research altogether? This beastly thought we do not accept. For, men having good and bad before them, it behooves a reasonable human being to concentrate on the *better*. So then let us ask how a *better* figure may be made. . . .' (Quoted in Panofsky, p. 275)

I. Unit Objectives

This unit of study contains certain basic concepts associated with the topic which students will be expected to define and use:

A. Core Concepts

architecture	humanities
autobiography	indulgences
chivalry	infallibility
Church Council	justification
classical civilization	Papal Bull
clergy	philosopher
compromise	pope
conscience	priesthood
citystate	nationalism
courtier	Protestant
excommunication	reform
feudalism	Renaissance

Gothic	Reformation
Great Schism	sacrament
heretic	salvation
hierarchy	satire
Humanism, Christian	secular
Humanism, Italian	vernacular
humanist	virtu

B. Learning Objectives

Students will be encouraged to examine present value systems based on value systems of the past. In addition, students should be able to identify certain underlying causes of change during both the Renaissance and the Reformation. They will be expected to be able to identify certain characteristics of Italian Humanism and how it was similar to and different from Christian Humanism. What were some of the effects of each philosophy on individuals and groups? They will be expected to name accomplishments of at least one artist of the Renaissance period and at least three new themes of Renaissance art.

Those enrolled in this course will be expected to critique certain religious and humanistic ideas, such as this one describing man:

‘To you, (man) is given a body more graceful than other animals, to you power of apt and various movements, to you most sharp and delicate senses, to you wit, reason, memory like an immortal god.’ (Quoted in Clark, p. 89)

A description such as this is intended to give the students clues as to certain underlying assumptions about the condition of the author (Albert) and about the condition of his contemporaries. It was Alberti who was credited with saying, “A man can do all things if he will.”

This course primarily attempts to look upon man as a complex being, whether he be an artist, philosopher, poet, politician or pope. In documenting the ideas of man in this historical period, whether they be expressed on canvas, in stone or in books, the primary goal is to force the student to think about himself or herself so that the student is beginning to develop the tools of critical thinking and analysis so necessary in the modern world of education.

C. Behavioral Objectives

During these approximately two weeks of study, the student will be expected to participate in: at least one class presentation (roleplay, debate, or oral report); one small group project with other class members; one interview or opinion survey on some presentday topic related to the unit topic, e.g., “what is success?” or “what people do you admire and why?” Also, class members will be expected to maintain an orderly folder containing all assignments and notes. There will be daily opportunities for students to become involved through a variety of classroom assignments and activities. Every class member will participate in the mock trial lesson with certain research skills utilized.

III. Unit Summary and Strategies

A. The Renaissance

The introductory lesson will be an attempt to bridge the gap between life in the Middle Ages and life in what we today call the “Renaissance.” Emphasis here will focus on the institutions that dominated the Middle Ages, the feudal manors and the Church. Four slides will be shown to students to illustrate the contrasting nature of the times:

1. relief of Adam and Eve after the Fall (“Bronze Doors of Bishop Bernward” at Hildesheim Cathedral, Janson, p. 207) which pictures the Lord pointing an accusing finger at a cringing Adam, who passes the blame to his mate, while she, in turn passes it to the serpent at her feet. Both figures of Adam and Eve are shamefully trying to cover themselves with fig leaves;
2. photograph of the interior of a Gothic Cathedral (“View of the North Clerestroy Wall of the Nave, Chartres Cathedral,” Janson, p. 237) featuring beautiful stained glass windows, buttressed vaults, and delicate vertical columns giving an uplifting heavenward appeal;
3. painting of serfs working the land in front of a walled castle (“October” from “Les Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry,” Janson, p. 257) illustrating in full color the planting of a winter crop by peasants, with nobility and monks visible before the castle wall;
4. equestrian statue of a Verona ruler in full armor (“Statue of Can Grande della Scala,” Janson, p. 263) portraying a selfconfident, grinning picture of power and victory—a knight in shining armor?

After viewing the slides, the teacher will ask students to discuss the slides in light of the question from Psalm eight: “What is man that Thou are mindful of him?” What can be said about man as he approaches the end of one era and the dawning of another?

Historian Kenneth Clark put it this way: “At the end of the tenth century in Europe. . . Man is no longer the *image* of a man, but a human being, with humanity’s impulses and fears; also humanity’s moral sense and the belief in a higher power.” (Clark, p. 31)

Students next will be asked to read an assignment from their text (Beers, pp. 213, 215) which highlights the plagues, wars and Church divisions which caused a desire for reform and a return to security and prosperity.

For the next four or five days, we will look at “Man’s Search for Meaning” in the Italian Renaissance. The students will have read a textbook account (Beers, pp. 281-284) summarizing the factors which promoted Italy’s leadership in the change from medieval to modern civilization. Students will be expected to identify two or three of these factors. Students in this lesson will read different selections by three “successful” Renaissance individuals and report back to their classmates how each of these men defines “success.” Is this definition of success similar in any way to the old feudal-chivalric values? One reading selection will be from Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Courtier*, which brings out the old chivalry but also knowledge of classics appreciation of literature, eloquence and good taste. Another short reading from Benvenuto Cellini’s *Autobiography*, brings out an extreme individualism. A third and final reading is from Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, and emphasizes the practical application of political principles in a cruel and corrupted world. These selections should illustrate for the students the character trait called *virtu* (from the Latin *vir* which

means “free man”), the combination of qualities which made for greatness in statesmanship, artistic creation or literature. A discussion of *virtu* in its many forms and facets will conclude the lesson.

Nearly a complete day would be spent describing the “universal man” or “Renaissance man.” The individual we shall focus on is Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) and his many accomplishments as an artist, architect, poet and writer. Alberti’s statement, “A man can do all things if he will,” is worth considering as it reflects back on our earlier discussion of *virtu*, in the sense that determination combined with genius brings the desired result. Students will read from the prologue of *On Painting* in which he praises the Florentine artists for bringing great fame to the city of Florence, and citing them as even greater than the ancients. There will also be a discussion of his book *On Architecture* with the following ideas: (1) city planning approaches based on a proper analysis of conditions; (2) the relatively higher importance assigned to buildings in a city with churches first, civic and business second, and housing third. Buildings should contribute to the public, not the private good. His idea that buildings built harmoniously, according to the principles of nature, would enable a person to discover the meaning of a harmonious wellbalanced life. There is much to be discovered about Alberti and much to be discussed as he leads us into an important element of Renaissance art: the principle of reason as being necessary to artistic expression.

Alberti said:

‘And the mind, stimulated and warmed up by practice, will apply itself quickly and adroitly to the work, and that hand will follow most speedily which is well guided by the unerring insight of the mind.’ (Quoted in Panofsky, p. 273)

Alberti believed in an objective norm for beauty and this standard can be discovered through the mind of man.

Jacob Burckhardt described Alberti (*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 1860) as a mathematician, physicist, architect, painter, sculptor and writer. He commanded expertise in so many different areas that it is impossible to put Alberti into any one category. A relevant question to ask of the Renaissance and the men who made it is: Can the currents of Renaissance culture be unified into a systematic system? Is Renaissance man, like the Renaissance itself, too complex and varied to put into definable limits?

Follow an assignment from the students’ text (Beers, pp. 282-284) which introduces the basic nature of the Italian Humanists and their stress on the study of the humanities. By studying subjects taught in ancient Greek and Roman schools (grammar, rhetoric, poetry and history), Humanists believed that education was the only way to enjoy a full life. As one scholar put it:

‘I beg you, take care. Add a little every day and gather things in. Remember that these studies promise you enormous prizes both in the conduct of your life and the fame and glory of your name. . . Acquaint yourself with what pertains to life and manners—those things that are called humane studies because they perfect and adorn men.’ (Quoted in Beers, p. 283)

Based on our class discussion of Alberti and others, we observe that individual abilities were to be encouraged in a Renaissance education. How were these professional Humanists a “new breed?”

Generally they (Humanists) were laymen who made a living by their learning, not clerics or monks devoting spare time to classical study. They were selfmade men who were peddling a new type of scholarship to their contemporaries—and who found the market very good. . . (There were) eager students in Florence and elsewhere.

The Humanists revived the study of classical Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and they got the ruling classes of the Italian cities excited about what they were doing. (Strayer, p. 351)

Many Humanists combined their religious faith with their scholarship. For example, Petrarch (1304-1374) wrote, "Christ is my God; Cicero is the prince of the language I use."

During this class period students will read a brief selection (from Strayer, pp. 350-351) by Petrarch, often called the father of a new Humanism. In this selection, he defends his love for the classical writers and his belief that they taught the central ethical values which later were expressed in Christianity. He saw no conflict between the ancient truths and God's Truth; all truth was indivisible.

Another Humanist reading, either for class or homework is one selected from Coluccio Salutati, from "A Letter in Defense of Liberal Studies." This assignment stresses the importance of the liberal arts as essential to the Christian, especially the studies of grammar, dialectic (logic) and rhetoric (public speaking). He summarizes his case in this way:

'Imagine for yourself a person well grounded in the . . . literary studies; then let him enter on the study of Christian doctrine and sacred literature at the same time with another person untrained in (them). . . and which do you think would become. . . the more rapidly, or the more completely, the trained man, or the crude and ignorant one?' (Quoted in Gundersheimer, pp. 234)

Students will be asked to evaluate the value of Humanistic education and the possible effects of this education during the Renaissance. Why was this form of education potentially valuable to the aristocratically controlled city-states of Italy? Why did some historians call humanistic education a "revolution?" What of the Church's influence as the focus of life seemed to come more on this world rather than on the next, and life became more secularized?

No unit on the Renaissance would be complete without an exposure to some of the great artistic achievements of Renaissance painters and sculptors. The slides I plan to show (and make available as part of this project) emphasize two main points: First, human scale. To illustrate this concept students will see two pictures of the Pazzi Chapel in Florence (interior and exterior). In contrast to the Gothic style, the human proportions and scale of this space asserts the dignity of man and makes the individual more conscious of his capabilities and powers. We also observe certain mathematical balance and geometric proportions.

The second set of slides help to show the tensions between the classical influence and the Christian art of the time.

- Boticelli's "The Birth of Venus" (Janson, Colorplate 36, p. 316) shows the influence of Greek myth and brings out the themes of youth, love and beauty. The Venus image has changed into a shy
1. pale rendering of the Virgin Mary, attempting to reconcile the pagan and the Christian in art. "Divine love" has replaced "human love," natural birth has given way to a divine rebirth. So claimed the NeoPlatonists.
 2. Giorgione's "The Tempest" (Janson, Colorplate 40, p. 371) is supposedly seen through the eyes of St. Francis as a piece of God's creation. But the scene is naturalistic and pagan. The persons in the painting are sensuous and passive. Who are they? The only action is that of the storm soon to sweep away the beauty of the scene, a moment in time.
 3. Masaccio's "St. Peter Healing the Sick" shows perspective of Renaissance buildings in a contemporary setting, uniting Christianity and community.

Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" from the Sistine Chapel shows the superhuman man as he awakens to self-consciousness. Could this be a symbol of Renaissance man himself?-(Janson, 4. p. 360) As the Creator rushes towards the earthbound Adam to receive the "divine spark", Adam reaches out, not only toward God, but also to a yet-unborn Eve, whom he sees hidden in the clouds.

A quotation by a contemporary historian completes this section of the unit:

Michelangelo, perhaps the most typical as well as the greatest artist of them all, gave his life to attempting the impossible: to reconciling the classical ideal of harmony, balance, and 'nothing in excess,' with the limitless goals and boundless love of Christian piety. This attempt to reconcile the Greco-Roman and Hebraic-Christian worlds was the central striving of the Renaissance. (Strayer, p. 357)

B. The Protestant Reformation

The subtitle for the second half of this curriculum unit could be called, "The Search for Meaning" or "Challenges to the Church."

The Church in the Middle Ages assumed the role of "guardian of the faith" and officially claimed to be the conscience of Christian rulers and their subjects. This claim, however, did not go unchallenged. Early in the fourteenth century, King Philip IV of France objected to Church influence: (1302)

'The pope pretends that we are subject to him in the temporal government of our states and that we hold the crown from the Apostolic See. . . . This kingdom which (our ancestors) have until now so wisely governed—it appears that it is not from God alone, as everyone has always believed, that we hold it, but from the pope.'

(Quoted in Strayer, p. 270)

The first challenges to Church authority came from nonconformists within the church itself such as St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) who insisted on absolute poverty for himself and his followers, imitating the example of Christ and the apostles. St. Francis narrowly escaped being labelled a heretic, but many of his followers did. A reading from George B. Shaw's play, *St. Joan* illustrates a new threat to the monolithic Church, nationalism.

'I can only tell you that (nationalism) is essentially anti-Catholic and anti-Christian; for the Catholic Church knows only one realm, and that is the realm of Christ's kingdom. Divide that kingdom into nations and you dethrone Christ.' (p.99)

In 1431, at the age of nineteen, she was burned at the stake, a heretic. In 1920, she was canonized a saint. The question is an interesting one: Which of today's heretics will become tomorrow's heroes?

The students will read a summary of the ideas of John Wycliffe (1328-1384), who claimed the Scriptures to be the only authority, with Christ, not the Pope as the head of the universal church. He translated the Bible into the vernacular and was condemned by the archbishop of Canterbury. Wycliffe's influence was later felt in Bohemia, where John Huss led a large following and was ultimately excommunicated and condemned by the Council of Constance for refusing to yield to his conscience based on his views of Scripture and his insistence that the cup be administered to the laity at the Lord's Supper. Huss was condemned and burned at the stake in 1415. A resulting war against Hussite followers in Bohemia lasted twenty years and proved indecisive.

Other factors leading to criticism of the Church were its decline in prestige due to the Great Schism

(1378-1417) and the decline in power of certain European secular rulers upon whom the Church depended to enforce certain taxes and orders. Within the Church loyalty was beginning to ebb with the ideas of St. Francis who opposed the Church's ownership of property; St. Thomas' allowances for bringing in Aristotle's ideas into Christian thought. Furthermore, thinkers at the University of Paris (1379) promoted the idea that the authority of the Church rested not in the papacy but in the entire body of believers and called for a Church Council to settle the matter.

Renaissance popes, as a rule, were doing nothing to increase confidence in the Church. Many were patrons of Humanism and the arts. Two were noted for their wars (Julius II was known as the "Warrior Pope"); Rodrigo Borgia (Alexander VI, 1492-1503) lived openly with his mistresses. Alexander gave his Spanish relatives whatever they asked for, and his illegitimate son, Cesare, made a bloody attempt to become ruler of all central Italy with his father's help. Splendor became a substitute for reform.

Finally, Pope Julius II agreed that changes were necessary and began to open dialogue for reform. Further events suggest that rising expectations during a time of crisis do very little to quench the fire of change but actually fan the flames into a larger conflagration. This dialogue was opened in the first two decades of the sixteenth century, sixty years after the humanist scholar Lorenzo Valla in 1440 had proved the Donation of Constantine to be a forgery.

To focus students' attention on the ideas of northern humanism, we shall spend a class period describing one of its famous representatives, Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). Erasmus, like other German humanists was a sincere churchman, anxious to improve and reform Church practices and policies. He was born into poverty, became a priest in 1492 but soon left the monastery and his interest in ancient writings led him to a study of classical Greek. He studied classical literature and later translated the New Testament into Greek. By 1520, he was regarded by many to be the "prince" of humanistic scholars because of the influence and quality of his writings, many of which were based on the primary sources of ancient literature. A sample of a reading for students follows:

His thought was that education, return to the sources of Christian truth, and flagellation (Whipping) of ignorance and immorality by merciless satire would bring the church to purity. To this end he worked. His *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* (1502) was a simple straightforward presentation of an unclerical Christianity. . . His *Praise of Folly* (1509) was a biting satire on the evils of his age in church and state. His *Familiar Colloquies* of 1518 were discussions in which fastings, pilgrimages, and similar external observances were the targets of his brilliant pen. (Walker, p. 294)

He, along with many others, including Martin Luther, believed that the Church was permeated with superstition, corruption and false doctrine. He bitingly criticized the clergy and civil rulers, but had no wish to break with the Church that he often unmercifully attacked. Erasmus believed that individuals had the God-given right to seek reform in the Church, but in the final analysis, Christians must depend on Church Councils to decide matters of correct doctrine. The Church, ultimately, was God's agent on earth and had to be recognized as such, regardless of the individual Christian's dissatisfactions with its practices. There is much room for disagreement within the Church, as the following quotation by Erasmus illustrates :

'In fact, the variety of ceremonies does not break up the peace of the Church; there are opinions on which it is possible to disagree, without the destruction of peace between Christians.' (Quoted in Olin, et al., eds., p. 110)

To Erasmus, Christianity was essentially ethical religion and the social teachings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount comprised its main essentials. Also, the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome were to be

considered teachers of what was good and noble and true. The historical uniqueness of Christ, so essential to Martin Luther, was absent in Erasmus as he promoted an international Christendom rather than a personal Christianity. A final selection from Erasmus' *Colloquies* underscores his admiration for Christian character traits in pagan heroes:

. . .the attitude of Socrates in the face of death is discussed. His resignation and hope, so proper to the Christian, inspires Erasmus' interlocutor (mouthpiece) to utter these frequently quoted words: 'I can hardly help exclaiming, "Saint Socrates, pray for us." ' (Olin, ea., p. 20)

To Erasmus, the reformer, the promotion of humanist scholarship and the broadening of Christian knowledge together will improve the condition of mankind. God's way will be revealed through knowledge that morality is a better way than immorality; good is more practical than evil; common sense is to be preferred over theological treatises. Erasmus believed it was possible to unite people of all nations under the Christian banner if reason and good will were fully exercised.

'If we apply ourselves to the task of establishing peace in the Church with moderate advice and calm minds, that which Isaiah prophesies will take place. "And my people will set down in the beauty of peace, in the tabernacles of confidence and in opulent rest. Let us all say as we rejoice with one another—How loveable, O Lord of power, are Thy tabernacles.'" (Quoted in Dolan, pg. 388)

The next class period, students will spend evaluating the ideas and beliefs of the Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546). Following an assigned reading from the students' text (Beers, pp 294-296), we will summarize his views on indulgences and justification by personal faith in Jesus Christ.

In the fifteenth century, Pope Sixtus IV claimed the power to release the souls of the dead from the penance they were doing in Purgatory, if contributions called "indulgences" were made on the dead loved one's behalf. Special indulgences had been issued beginning in 1506, for the purpose of building the new church of St. Peter in Rome. Luther was enraged by the crass sales techniques of a Dominican friar named Johann Tetzel (1470-1519) who is reported to have claimed, "So soon as coin in coffer rings, the soul from Purgatory springs." As Tetzel approached Luther's hometown of Wittenberg, Germany, Luther prepared ninety-five theses, or propositions for academic debate on the subject of indulgences. His main points were these:

'There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of purgatory immediately after the money clinks in the bottom of the chest. . . All those who believe themselves certain of their own salvation by means of letters of indulgences will be eternally damned, together with their teachers. . . Any Christian whatsoever, who is truly repentant, enjoys remission from penalty and guilt, and this is given him without letters of indulgence.' (Quoted in Strayer, p. 378)

Luther's experience as a monk had led him to reject the doctrine that good works could win a person's salvation. Fasting, praying and confession had led him only to a deeper sense of guilt, depression, and spiritual crisis. Peace finally came after discovering what St. Paul wrote in the first chapter of the epistle of Romans: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Luther's futile efforts to satisfy God through self-justification gave way to the belief that in the matter of saving a man's soul, man can do nothing; God does everything. The implications of this line of thinking proved to be revolutionary. If man is saved by faith alone, then religious ceremonies and rites, even sacraments, are unnecessary and even dangerous because they imply that man can offer something to God through "good works" that would make man acceptable and worthy of salvation. Only a right personal relationship with God could satisfy Him. Therefore Luther struck at the "good work" that apparently all of Germany was ready to

hear about, indulgences. The true treasury of the church, claimed Luther, was God’s forgiving grace, not a coffer of coins extracted by the pope’s agents promising something that went against the teachings of Scripture. What was Luther’s attitude at this time? Was he seeking to break with the Catholic Church and the Pope? Or was this just a protest against a public abuse? His letter to Archbishop Albrecht accompanying the famous Theses gives the answer (October, 1517):

‘I pray that you may accept this humble but faithful admonition graciously as ruler and bishop, even as I submit it with a faithful and devoted heart. For, too, I am one of your sheep. The Lord guard and guide you forever. Amen.’
(Quoted in Olin *et.al.* , eds., p. 30)

There is evidence to support the fact that Luther himself was amazed at the public response to this spark which produced the explosion which irreparably split the Christian Church into Catholic and Protestant. Written in academic language, the theses were intended to be propositions for debate, not powder for a debacle.

Charges of heresy were levelled at Luther and he was summoned to Rome to appear before the Pope, Leo X (1513-1521), but because of protection from his prince in Germany Elector Frederick “the Wise” the hearing at Augsburg, where, in October 1518, he was ordered to retract his views on papal authority in the matter of indulgences. Luther courageously refused. In fear of his life, friends in Augsburg smuggled him out of town.

At dead of night, a canon of the cathedral smuggled him out by a hole in the town wall; a mounted city messenger was waiting with a second horse. Just as he was, without trousers or boots, the monk got into the saddle; the messenger, who never said a word, spurred his horse, and the horse with Luther on it followed, away, away. . . . The story of Luther’s ride, trouserless, without spurs, bounced black and blue, caused much amusement in a good many circles. (Simon, pp. 169, 171)

In a famous debate in June and July of 1519, Luther admitted that the Council of Constance had made an error by condemning John Huss. He had already declared that the Pope was not the final authority in Church matters; now he apparently rejected the infallibility of Church councils. The Pope’s Bull of Condemnation was issued a year later, in June, 1520. During this year of delay, Luther’s ideas were quickly solidifying. His writings were devoted to establishing the authority of Scripture as supreme, and redefining the Christian Church and the duties of a believer toward God and his fellow man.

Students should be encouraged to ask why did Luther affect the people so radically and prove to be so popular? Part of the answer lies in the practical nature of his program for Church reform. He was proposing a formula which people had been long ready to accept. The people saw Luther as a man of great courage and personal convictions, willing to stand up for his beliefs before the awesome power of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy. A further appeal to the people was Luther’s proclamation of the personal “good news” of forgiveness from God.

‘Is it not wonderful news to believe that salvation lies outside ourselves? I am justified and acceptable to God—even though there are in me sin, unrighteousness, and fear of death. . . . Faith is enough for the Christian. He has no need for works to be made just. But he is not therefore to be lazy or loose. Good works do not make a man good, but a good man does good works.’ (Quoted in Simon, p. 238)

Another significant idea developed by Luther was in the priesthood of the believer, which overthrew the Church’s longheld practice of an ecclesiastical superiority in spiritual matters. This meant for the people that their daily lives could be lived in a manner that was spiritual service, holy and acceptable to God. To Luther, the Christian’s life was a paradox: His freedom is predicated on his justification by faith in Christ; he is a

servant because he is bound by love to serve God and neighbor while conforming to the image of Christ.

These ideas resulted in a final Papal Bull in January, 1521, and an order for Luther to appear before the Emperor Charles V for the civil authorities to hear his case. He travelled to the city of Worms in April, 1521, cheered on by large crowds of people. Would he be asked to recant his beliefs? Would he be martyred? Would the government agree to protect him as a citizen of the Holy Roman Empire? The state was set for real drama. The entire Christian world awaited the outcome.

The culminating activity of the unit is a mock trial of the Diet of Worms. The trial should prove a viable way to involve the students in one of three roles: (1) supporters of Luther and his views; (2) supporters of the Church and its views; (3) supporters of Erasmus, the middle road, and his views.

Students will be provided with Luther's views from various sources and will spend one class period preparing in groups. A list of charges will be drawn up by the EmperorChurch group which will be distributed to the other two groups. Issues range from indulgences, papal v. Biblical authority, good deeds v. salvation by grace, etc. The broad themes to apply will be these:

- a. What is a fundamental belief, not subject to compromise?
- b. What is a nonfundamental point of belief which can (and perhaps should) be compromised?
- c. What is the notion of "truth" and how can it be discovered?
- d. When, if ever, is it right to disobey authority?
- e. When is silence a better strategy than using words?
- f. To what extent does man have a "free will?"
- g. What role do people have in determining their ultimate destiny?
- h. How important is the Bible in the life of a Christian?

The role play, which should take one full class period, will be evaluated by students in an assignment based on three points?

- a. How did the events of the Reformation in Germany prove inevitable?
- b. How was Luther a "man for his times?" Why did so many follow him even though he was branded a heretic and outlaw?
- c. Debate the following thesis: "Resolved, the Reformation hatched the 'egg' which was laid by the Renaissance."

As a final passage, students will consider this quotation from an historian who gives a succinct evaluation of Luther and his place in history:

Martin Luther. . .is one of the few men of whom it may be said that the history of the world was profoundly altered by his work. Not an organizer or politician, he moved men by the power of a profound religious faith, resulting in unshakable trust in God, and in direct, immediate and personal relations to Him, which brought a confident salvation that left no room for the elaborate hierarchical and sacramental structures of the Middle Ages. . . . Whether honored or opposed, none can deny his pre-eminent place in the history of the church. (Walker p.

III. Strategies to Achieve Objectives: A Summary

The unit has been designed as inductive in nature, i.e., to raise historical questions and then allow students to examine historical documents to arrive at conclusions based on the information available to them. Because of the overall scope of the unit and the time constraints, students will be divided into research groups which will report their findings to the rest of the class. This strategy is designed to encourage discussion and oral and listening skills.

Students will keep lists of vocabulary words and concepts within their groups. Glossaries will be available to them to consult. Research will also be encouraged independently.—

The teacher will hand out specific questions to answer based on readings to make certain factual material is summarized.

Maps will be handed out to each student, so that he or she can locate important geographical areas affected by the Renaissance and the Reformation.

Student “instructors” will be utilized whenever possible to explain facts and ideas discovered in small groups.

The topic lends itself to such innovative and creative methods as the teacher wishes to employ. Appropriate methods of student involvement could include debates (to reform the Church from within or to break with it); roleplays (several “men of virtue” from Florence discussing a political course of action); and small group activities.

IV. Sample Lesson Plans

A. Lesson One “The Spirit of the Renaissance”

Objectives After completing the lesson, students should be able

1. To identify at least two factors which contributed to Italy’s leadership in the Renaissance;
2. To tell what certain key concepts (“renaissance,” “humanities,” “classics,” “city-state”) mean;
3. To give a Renaissance definition of “success” in Florence during this period.

Lesson Procedures

- Hand out Worksheet based on the students' text, pages 281-284, which they have already
1. been assigned as homework. They will be asked to discuss Objectives one and two above to test their grasp of the subject matter.

- Students will be then divided into groups and assigned one of three readings: one from
2. Castiglione's *The Courtier* ; a second from Cellini's *Autobiography* ; a third from Machiavelli's *The Prince* .

- Students will be asked to define important terms in each reading and asked the question:
3. "How is this person an example of "success" and "virtu?" What did it take to be a "good" Florentine in the fifteenth century?
 4. Students from each group will report back to the entire class while the teacher summarizes the main points on the chalkboard.

Reading Samples (Lesson One)

- A. The new ideal image of the Italian aristocratgentleman was the subject of a book by Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtier* . He had the old virtues of chivalry, plus the new virtues of humanistic Florence of 1530 when the book was published. Notice how personality qualities are described as you read about the ideal man of "virtu" according to Castiglione.

' . . .I judge it his first duty to know how to handle every kind of weapon, both on foot and on horse, and know the advantages of each kind. . . .Apart from using them in war, there often arise differences between on gentleman and another, resulting in duels, and quite often those weapons are used which happen to be at hand. Hence, knowledge of them is a safe thing. . . .He must show courage in all things. Nor should he be quick to enter into a fight, except as his honor demands it of him. . . .

'(Hunting) is a true pastime for great lords. . . .He should know also how to swim, jump, run, throw stones; for besides their usefulness in war, it is frequently necessary to show one's prowess in such things, whereby a good name is to be won, especially with the crown (with whom one must reckon after all).

'I would have him more than passably learned in letters (literature), at least in those studies which we call the humanities. Let him be versed in the poets, as well as in the orators and historians, and let him be practiced also in writing verse and prose;. . . in this way he will never want for pleasant entertainment with the ladies, who are usually fond of such things.' (Quoted in Gundersheimer, ed., pp. 154, 155, 156, 159)

- B. Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) was a sculptor and goldsmith who described his exploits in his *Autobiography* (quoted in Strayer, p. 349) He believed that autobiography was an excellent form of expression and believed his book would be widely read since he was such an interesting person.

'All men of whatsoever quality they be, who have done anything of excellence,. . . ought to describe their life with their own hand. . . . I make no profession of writing history. It is enough for me to occupy myself with my own affairs. . . .

'After he (Paul III) had put affairs of greater consequence in order, the new Pope sent for me, saying that he did not wish any one else to strike (mint) his coins. To these words of his Holiness one of his gentlemen named Latino Juvinale (a Humanist) answered that I (Cellini) was in hiding for the murder of Pompeo of Milan, and set forth what could be argued for my justification (pardon) in the most favorable terms. The Pope replied: "I know nothing of Pompeo's death but plenty of Benvenuto's provocation, so let a safe-conduct be at once made out for him. A great friend of Pompeo's was there; he was a Milanese called Ambrogio, a papal secretary. This man said: "In the first days of your papacy, it is not well to grant pardons of this kind." The Pope answered: "You know less about such matters than I do. Know then that men like Benvenuto (Cellini), unique in their profession, stand above the law."

C. Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) was a foreign ambassador for Florence who had years of practical experience in politics, as well as having read classical writings. In his writings, he described things as they were, not as they should be. He admired the Roman system as the best historical example of an ideal government, but realized that it might be too difficult for a corrupt and divided group of Italian citystates to revive. What was needed was a prince of real "virtu" with the courage of a lion and the cunning of a fox in order to build a strong state in Italy. Fortune might make his work difficult, but a man of "virtu" should at least have a fifty-fifty chance of beating the odds. The following is from Machiavelli's, *The Prince* :

'Is it better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but it is much safer to be feared than loved when one of the two must be chosen. . . . In general (men) are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowards, covetous. As long as you succeed, they are your entirely . . . Men have fewer scruples (principles) in offending (going against) one who is beloved than one who is feared, for love is preserved by the link of obligation which . . . is broken at every opportunity, but fear preserved you by a dread of punishment that never fails.

'You must know, then, that there are two methods of fighting, the one by law, the other by force: the first method is that of men, the second of beasts; but as the first method is often insufficient, one must have recourse to the second. It is therefore necessary for a prince to know well how to use both the beast and the man. . . . A wise ruler ought not to keep faith (honor agreements) when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist. If men were all good, this precept would not be a good one; but as they are bad, and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them.' (Quoted in Strayer, p. 354)

B. Lesson Two "Mock Trial: Luther at the Diet of Worms" (2 days)

Objectives After completing the Lesson students should be able

1. To summarize two reasons why the Church and State wanted Luther silenced;
2. To empathize to a certain extent with the different parties in this debate;
3. To understand how the role of mediator works (or doesn't work);
4. To evaluate key factors in the decisionmaking process.

Lesson Procedures

1. Teacher hands out a "Fact Sheet" to students, which includes necessary background information of events leading up to 1521 (previous night's homework).
2. Teacher divides up the class into three groups. One group are the "Emperors," another are the "Lutherans," and a third are the "Erasmians."
3. Teacher hands out separate "Role Sheets" to each group. Each "Role Sheet" has information necessary to perform in the Mock Trial accurately.
After giving each group time to plan their strategy and to ask questions, the "Lutherans" are asked to give their testimony before the Diet, run by the "Emperors." The "Erasmians" are expected to interject compromise suggestions when appropriate. "Emperors" may choose to ask followup questions of the "Lutherans."
4. After the Trial is over, students are expected to write out an evaluation of the Trial. Could the results have been different? If so, how? Were you happy with the results? What may happen as a result of the action taken by the "Emperors?"
- 5.

Sample Role Sheet "The Lutherans"

Instructions . Your group represents the ideas of Martin Luther. Study the quotations below so that you can answer questions from the other two groups, the "Emperors" and the "Erasmians." You may also use class notes and assignments to help make your case stronger.

Issue 1 : Indulgences

- a. "The Bible no where teaches that when a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from Purgatory springs."
- b. "The sale of these indulgences is telling people they can purchase someone else's salvation. This is a corrupt lie and must be stopped."
- c. "Priests should preach the Gospel and love of Christ as Christ commanded, not preach indulgences as He did not."

Issue 2 : The Authority of the Bible

- a. "The Scriptures alone are the foundation of our beliefs as Christians."
- b. "I stand on the Word of God as recorded in the Bible."
- c. "There is no need for bloodshed. The world will be conquered by the Word of God, and by the Word the Church will be rebuilt and reformed."

Issue 3 : Faith and Works

- a. "Faith cannot be inherited or gained by being baptized into a Church. Faith is a matter between the individual and God."

- b. "The truly faithful in the Church is a relatively small number, for 'narrow is the gate and few there be that find it'"
- c. "Faith is from God, not from man. Man can do nothing to earn or receive it. We are right with God by faith alone."

Issue 4 : Church practices (Sacraments)

- a. "The celebration of the Mass (the Lord's Supper) is not for the clergy alone. All believers are priests; therefore, all should celebrate together."
- b. "The words of the priests do not transform the bread into Christ's body or the wine into His blood. Christ is present no matter what words are spoken or ceremonies performed."
- c. "There should be no sacraments except those found in the Bible: I can find only two, the Lord's Supper and Baptism."

Issue 5 : Church authority

- a. "I will not be convinced by popes and councils but by Scripture and plain reason."
- b. "I do not believe that in order to be a believing Christian you have to believe in the pope also."
- c. "A simple layman armed with scripture is above any pope or Church council."

Issue 6 : The Papal Bull, 1520

- a. "I was called by the Pope (Leo X) a wild boar in the vineyard of the Lord. My books were ordered to be burned. I was excommunicated without having the opportunity to defend my beliefs. Is this God's justice?"
- b. "Whatever may happen, I have peace in my being. Not a leaf falls to the ground without God's knowledge. How much less can any of us fall unless it be His will."
- c. "Let them burn my books. I for my part will publicly burn and condemn the Church's entire canon law. The faith and the Church are at stake."

Issue 7 : Miscellaneous Published Comments by Luther

- a. "The Church authorities have excommunicated me for heresy, I excommunicate them in the name of the sacred truth of God. Christ will judge whose excommunication will stand."
- b. "All the condemned articles of John Huss are Christian."
- c. Seldom has the Pope overcome anyone with Scripture and with reason."

Issue 8 : Luther's Comments on relics and courage

- "What lies there are about relics! One claims to have a feather from the wing of the Angel
a. Gabriel; one has a flame from Moses' burning bush. And how does it happen that 18 apostles are buried in Germany when Christ had only 12?"
b. "My conscience is prisoner to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise."
c. From his famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God":

"That Word they never can dismay, However much they batter. For God himself is in the fray, And nothing else can matter. Then let them take our life, Goods, honor, children, wife. We will let all go. They shall not conquer so, For God will win the battle."

V. Bibliography

A. Useful Texts

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Textbook used in the New Haven high schools in the Western Civilization course.

Strayer, Joseph R. and Hans W. Gatzke, *The Mainstream of Civilization* . New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1984.

Excellent collegelevel text; adaptable for use in high schools. Chapters on Renaissance (sixteen) and Reformation (seventeen) have appropriate primary source quotations and brief biographies of famous men of the period. Very helpful in preparing this unit.

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B. General References

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Highly recommended for student and teacher alike. Accurate, balanced and readable account with excellent illustrations and woodcuts. Especially valuable for the details of the "tract and pamphlet war" waged between Luther and his detractors. Full of usable quotations.

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A collection of brief articles by a foremost Luther scholar. Not directly quoted in this unit.

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Contains an excellent introduction and a sixpage life of this scholarly Christian humanist. Articles by Erasmus include, "The Handbook of the Militant Christian," "The Praise of Folly, and "On Mending the Peace of the Church."

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Janson, H. W., with Dara Jane Jans on, *History of Art. A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day* . Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: PrenticeHall, Inc., 1968.

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Contains an autobiographical sketch by Erasmus and two evaluations of the man and his work, one by a friend

and colleague, Beatus Rhenanus.

_____, James D. Smart and Robert E. McNally, S.J., eds., *Luther, Erasmus and the Reformation. A Catholic-Protestant Reappraisal* . New York: Fordham University Press, 1969.

Stimulating collection of eight essays viewing Luther and the age in which he lived. Bainton's article "The Problem of Authority in the Age of the Reformation" was particularly worthwhile in the preparation of this unit as were several others.

Panofsky, Erwin, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Durer* . Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1955.

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Translation of Alberti's work; includes more than forty pages of drawings and diagrams by Alberti. Also includes an interesting tribute to Alberti by Raphael du Fresne, a contemporary admirer of this great man of the Renaissance.

Simon, Edith, *Luther Alive. Martin Luther and the Making of the Reformation* . Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1968.

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